



Teacher Ergonomics

Teachers may experience a wide range of musculoskeletal symptoms as they spend the day on their feet, bending, squatting down to low tables, sitting to grade papers or use computers. Whether standing on your feet or sitting good ergonomic practices can help you stay healthy. If appropriate methods are not incorporated into daily work, ergonomic problems can result in muscle and joint injuries. According to the National Safety Council, factors that contribute to poor ergonomics include working in awkward positions; having a poorly set-up workstation; overexerting yourself when lifting, pushing or pulling; and sitting for too long in one position.

Standing: A standing person is to some degree unstable which can produce back discomfort since the discs are being stressed. Stability can be increased by standing with feet shoulder width apart and switching weight from foot to other foot. Disc pressure can be reduced by using a footrest and frequently shift weight from one leg to the other. To combat the effects of static posture, the key is movement. Simply moving, walk around, stretch. It is more comfortable walking two to four minutes for every 15 minutes of standing without moving. For fatigue, from static standing or walking, 5 minutes of sitting is more helpful than one 15- minute break.



Bending and Squatting: When bending over a student desk, place one hand on the desk and take the upper body weight on the arm which removes the pressure from the back. Squatting is one alternative to bending at the back to get down low and it's fine for a short period of time. However, one should not squat for long periods, pull up a chair.

Sitting: Keep back in neutral position, maintaining all 3 natural curves in the spine. Keep head and neck aligned over shoulders. Sit back in chair, back should be supported by seat back. Adjust chair height so hips are slightly higher than knees and feet are flat on ground or footrest. Desk should be placed so elbows are at right angle, hands floating naturally over desktop or keyboard while typing or grading papers. Avoid sitting for long periods of time, get up from chair at least every hour. Do a few stretches!

It may take time to adjust to good ergonomic practices. But, it will matter little if the desk is the correct height if one is still hunching over to grade papers.